



## **News Release**

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### **World Arthritis Day is October 12**

*Focus is on exercise*

(Salt Lake City) – Utah Department of Health (UDOH) data show that, of the more than 415,000 Utah adults diagnosed with arthritis, more than 57,000 (13.8%) report they do no moderate or vigorous physical activity. Arthritis is the leading cause of disability in Utah and the nation, and physical activity is an essential way to manage the condition. With that in mind, the theme for World Arthritis Day 2011 is “Move to Improve.”

“Often, people with arthritis feel like they can’t be physically active, or don’t want to be, because of the pain,” said Rebecca Castleton, UDOH Arthritis Program Manager. “But staying sedentary actually increases the risk of injury, and physical activity is the best prescription for managing the disease,” she added.

Walking, swimming, biking, and arthritis-specific exercise programs can reduce pain, improve function, and delay disability. The UDOH partners with many groups, like the Arthritis Foundation, to offer education and physical activity programs for people with arthritis throughout the state.

To help manage the arthritis in her back, Eleanor Greenland has attended the Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program (AFEP) at the Kearns Senior Center since 2005.

“My doctor told me I would end up in a wheelchair if I didn’t keep moving,” said Greenland. “This class has been the best thing for my back. I pretty well can keep away from needing any pain medication.” Eleanor notices a difference if she can’t exercise for a few weeks. “When I exercise I don’t have as much pain.”

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Margaret Crowell teaches a weekly exercise program at Mt. Olympus Senior Center. She says she has halted progressive arthritis in both her thumb joints and hands by regularly doing the program's slow, gentle exercises. Her orthopedic specialist told her there was nothing she could do except take ibuprofen or exercise. She decided to try exercise first.

"I'm really tickled because I didn't want to get big, swollen thumbs and didn't want it to progress into other fingers. I am a knitter and use the typewriter, so I consider it a big success because I'm still going along and my thumbs are virtually pain-free," she added.

Many participants tell Crowell the class is what keeps them going despite their arthritis.

"At the beginning of each class we talk and build spirits, pass on any tips or news. We laugh a lot and have fun. I encourage participants to do the exercises at home 15 minutes every day to keep up progress. They can do them while sitting down, or even while reading or knitting."

This year, a national massage chain is joining the Foundation to celebrate World Arthritis Day. For every massage given on Wednesday, Oct. 12, the company will donate \$10 to the Foundation for research.

The UDOH partners with many groups to offer arthritis education and physical activity programs. To find one in your area, or to learn more about local efforts to address arthritis, visit [www.health.utah.gov/arthritis](http://www.health.utah.gov/arthritis) or call 801-538-9458. Or contact the Arthritis Foundation at 1-800-444-4993 or <http://www.arthritis.org/chapters/utah/>.

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*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care and promoting healthy lifestyles*